

VZCZCXRO7025
PP RUEHAST
DE RUEHBW #1509/01 2620829
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 190829Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9371
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 001509

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: MONTENEGRO ASSURES COOPERATION ON WAR CRIMES

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Ref: 2005 Belgrade 0057

This is a Podgorica cable. It has not been cleared with Embassy Belgrade.

¶1. (U) Summary: Ambassador Williamson, Special Envoy for War Crimes Issues, met on September 14 with PM Djukanovic, President Vujanovic, the Chief State Prosecutor, the head of the security service, and a private lawyer handling claims for compensation of war crimes. The meetings went well, with Montenegro promising its continued full support to ICTY and to regional efforts to prosecute war criminals. End summary.

Overview of USG Initiative

¶2. (U) Ambassador Williamson told interlocutors that "there are no difficult war crimes issues with Montenegro." He gave each an overview of the USG's new initiative to bring closure to the war crimes issues in the Balkans. First was a new focus on regional cooperation in domestic war crimes trials. He noted with approval recent agreement between Croatia and Montenegro to allow prosecution in Montenegro of its citizens suspected of war crimes in Croatia in 1992. He explained that a series of meetings and seminars will be held in the region to increase cooperation among governments, including prosecutors, judges, and security services, noting that S/WCI's regional representative will play a key role in those meetings. This will be the primary focus for Montenegro, he added. Second is an effort to conclude the ICTY trials by arresting six fugitives, particularly Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic.

Meetings with President and Prime Minister

¶3. (U) Prime Minister Djukanovic, having specifically requested to meet with Ambassador Williamson, gave his strong assurance that the GoM would continue to give its full support to the ICTY. He warmly welcomed the USG initiatives to increase regional cooperation on domestic war crimes trials, saying that he hoped that Montenegro could use its example and influence to advance the initiative. President Vujanovic gave similar support to the plan. Ambassador Williamson stated that the USG would look to Montenegro to take a leading role in cooperation between security services in the hunt for the ICTY fugitives. They also discussed the political climate in Serbia relating to the apprehension of these fugitives.

Speaking specifically about President Boris Tadic, Vujanovic noted that leaders should shape public opinion, not the other way around.

Meeting with Security Service

¶4. (SBU) Dusko Markovic, head of the National Security Agency, assured the Ambassador that his service would continue to support efforts to locate PIFWCs and support the prosecution of war criminals, as an integral part of his extant program of cooperation with the USG.

Meeting with State Prosecutor

¶5. (U) Vesna Medenica, the Chief State Prosecutor, assured Williamson of her office's continued support to ICTY, and that it was ready to handle domestic war crimes trials. She noted that her office was "actively" pursuing the 1992 deportations to Bosnia and Herzegovina (reftel), but that the courts were slow to implement investigative procedures. She added that the prosecutor in the case (also attending the meeting) had filed motions to accelerate the cases. On regional cooperation, she said she had good relations with the prosecutors in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia, but that differences in the legal systems created problems, and that she had no contact with the courts of states in the region.

Meeting With Lawyer Dragan Prelevic

¶6. (U) Dragan Prelevic families of 36 victims, including six survivors, who were deported from Montenegro to Foca in Republika Srpska in April-May 1992. Prelevic estimated a total of 85 to 100 persons, mainly male Muslims from Bosnia, were deported, the majority being killed by RS security forces. The cases were filed in Montenegro at the

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end of 2004 (reftel) seeking monetary compensation (Euros 300,000 per victim) from the GoM. Prelevic complained of stalling tactics by the Chief Prosecutor's Office, who is charged with defending the state of Montenegro in cases like these, in which Government officials are implicated in misconduct. Prelevic clarified that the victims are most interested in the Government admitting its errors and fault, and less in the amount of compensation. To date, only one case has reached a verdict, with the victim's mother and sister awarded a total of Euros 45,000. (Note: Local media reported on September 16 that a local judge had dismissed the judgment, asserting the case had been filed late. Information available to post indicates that the request for compensation was filed correctly and on time. End note.) Williamson underscored his ongoing interest in the cases, and his support for Prelevic's efforts.

¶7. (U) This cable was cleared by Ambassador Williamson after his departure.

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